

Telecommunications policy principles

ALA and several other library groups joined more than 60 organizations in announcing a new coalition and unveiling a blueprint for America's 21st century information infrastructure. The Telecommunications Policy Roundtable called on Americans to make their voices heard on vital issues of communications policy. The group issued seven public-interest principles in the areas of universal access, freedom to communicate, vital civic sector, diverse and competitive marketplace, equitable workplace, privacy protection, and democratic policy making.

Elaine Albright, dean of cultural affairs and libraries at the University of Maine and chair of the ALA Committee on Legislation's Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Telecommunications, spoke at the coalition's October 26 press conference in Washington, D.C., announcing the principles. Albright noted that several library groups—ALA, the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI), Libraries for the Future, the Medical Library Association (MLA), and the Special Libraries Association (SLA)—had all endorsed the principles.

Albright also said that these public-interest principles are consistent with the outcome of a policy forum held in September at which representatives of 15 national library and information associations (including ACRL) reached general consensus on areas of key information infrastructure principles.

Intellectual property and NII hearing held

Some 27 witnesses from a variety of personal and organizational points of view provided testimony at the November 18 public hearing on intellectual property issues involved in the National Information Infrastructure (NII) initiative. The hearing was held by the Working Group on Intellectual Property of the Information Policy Committee of the Administration's Information Infrastructure Task Force. Bruce

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Lehman, assistant secretary of commerce and commissioner of patents and trademarks, and chair of the working group, presided at the all-day event.

Robert Oakley, director of the Georgetown University Law Center Library and Washington representative of the AALL, testified on behalf of AALL, ALA, the Association of Academic Health Science Library Directors, the Association of

American Universities, ARL, CAUSE, CNI, EDUCOM, MLA, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History, and SLA.

Oakley commented on the specific questions asked by the working group, and summed up as follows:

"Although the library and education communities believe it is premature to propose specific legislative or regulatory reforms while the information infrastructure is still in its infancy, we are concerned about the need to reaffirm that the rights granted to educators and to libraries and their users apply in the electronic environment as they have in the paper environment. We also believe that the law needs some strengthening to allow libraries to utilize fully the newest technology to preserve the nation's heritage and to meet the needs of their users."

John Masten, executive vice-president of the New York Public Library, also testified, emphasizing democratic access to information in his points about what is desirable in any revision of intellectual property law and practice.

Oakley recommended that the working group make the transcript of the hearing available over the Internet, and the working group will consider doing so. Otherwise, transcripts of the hearing were to be made available from the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Box 4, Washington, DC 20231, in December 1993 for \$30 each. ■

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